

# **WATER QUALITY TEAM MEETING NOTES**

**April 16, 2002**

**National Marine Fisheries Service Offices  
Portland, Oregon**

## ***Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

Mark Schneider of NMFS, WQT co-chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting, held April 16 at the Corps of Engineers' Northwestern Division headquarters in Portland, Oregon. The meeting was facilitated by Donna Silverberg. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B. Please note that some of the enclosures referenced in these meeting notes may be too lengthy to routinely attach to the minutes; please contact Kathy Ceballos (503/230-5420) to obtain copies. Schneider noted that the archived WQT meeting minutes will soon be available via the NMFS website.

Chris Maynard said he had been informed that the California Intertie is down; the Corps has said it may be necessary to spill up to 130%. Dick Cassidy noted that involuntary spill remains a possibility, although the fact that the freshet has not yet begun in earnest makes this possibility somewhat less likely; his call to Maynard was just a heads-up to let the state water quality agencies know spill was a possibility. As it turns out, the extra spill did not occur, Cassidy said. In response to a request from Maynard, John Piccininni said he will discuss this topic with others at Bonneville, to see how frequently these types of potential involuntary spill events occur, and what the average duration of these events is. That would be helpful, from a dissolved gas abatement planning standpoint, Maynard said. Maynard added that he will discuss this issue with Russell Harding, to see what concerns Oregon may have on this topic. We'll look forward to more conversation on this topic at the May WQT meeting, Silverberg said.

## ***2. Data Quality Criteria/Regional Database System Standards.***

Laura Hamilton asked what the group's pleasure was today; you heard the presentation last time, she said, so if you now have any questions, please feel free to ask them. There were also some homework assignments from last meeting, Silverberg observed. Schneider said he had discussed the germane Biological Opinion language regarding QA/QC, redundant stations and backup instruments; in general, he said, NMFS is comfortable with the type of program the Corps Portland District has been running. My suggestion is that we put some language into the ongoing correspondence between NMFS and the action agencies, referencing the fact that, in NMFS' view, the Corps' proposal satisfies the intent of the BiOp.

Stu McKenzie said that, in his view, redundancy is not needed at this time; he said he supports the alternative approach the Corps is proposing.

Hamilton noted that, at a recent meeting, a PUD contractor expressed his view that the Corps could go to a four-week, rather than a two-week, calibration period. She said that, without committing itself one way or another, the Corps would like to get the WQT's feedback on that question. Various participants weighed in on this question; Dwight Tanner and McKenzie both expressed the viewpoint that four weeks is too long a calibration period, and would have a detrimental impact on data quality. After a few minutes of discussion, it was agreed to ask the fixed monitoring station representativeness workgroup to consider this question. This is also an issue of interest to the PUDs, Hamilton observed; I would prefer to finish this discussion when the PUDs can be present at the meeting.

As requested at the last meeting, various WQT participants furnished Hamilton with the names of database people from their agencies and others who will work with Hamilton on the standardization of water quality data and related issues. A lengthy discussion of the Corps' database needs ensued; Hamilton recapped her presentation on this topic from last meeting. She added that the Corps is planning a field trip to Washington DOE to look at that agency's database, to see whether or not it will meet the Corps' needs. Hamilton asked anyone interested in joining that field trip to contact her directly. Various participants, including Joe Rinella of USGS, offered their suggestions as to which existing databases might meet the Corps' needs. Ultimately, it was agreed that a database subgroup will be convened to help the Corps decide which database to use, and how standardization might best be accomplished.

### ***3. BiOp Action Item 143 Subgroup Report.***

Schneider said BiOp Action Item 143 addresses Snake River water temperatures and the need to develop a tool that can be used to manage the river for temperature control; he said this subgroup has met several times in the last few months. Stu McKenzie reported on the subgroup's activities, noting that all WQT participants are invited to attend the subgroup's meetings, which he characterized as extremely stimulating, active and productive. The subgroup's goal is to manage the river for the fish; that means having enough information about Snake River temperatures and how fish respond to allow the creation of a thermal environment that is as supportive of the fish as possible.

McKenzie went through some of the problems identified by the subgroup to date, as well as the management options under consideration: essentially, how best to use cool water from Dworshak reservoir, as well as storage from Brownlee Reservoir, to create a Snake River environment that is conducive to fish survival. McKenzie said the subgroup has identified nine major questions associated with the development of this management tool, and has also attempted to prioritize the importance of those questions and sub-questions. The subgroup will be attempting to answer as many of these questions as possible using existing research, McKenzie said. Realistically, it should be possible to answer some, but not all, of these questions using existing research, McKenzie said.

With respect to the timeline for this effort, McKenzie said the next subgroup meeting will be held on May 15 or 16 in Portland; the first draft of the subgroup's report will be produced by June 2002. The report will provide the answers to as many of the nine questions as possible, and will also describe what additional data needs to be collected, as well as what models should be used to help answer these questions. McKenzie said he will provide further updates as more information becomes available.

#### ***4. Re-Engagement on the Mainstem Columbia River Water Quality Plan.***

Jim Ruff said NMFS has sent a letter to the three regional sovereigns, asking them to re-engage on the mainstem Columbia River water quality plan development process. You will recall that we discussed this effort at the last WQT meeting, Ruff said; we followed up that discussion with this letter. We have now set a date and a time to meet to discuss this issue, and have been making contacts with agencies and tribes to invite them to attend. The meeting is scheduled for next Thursday, April 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at NMFS' Portland office. This will be an initial meeting, to discuss the proposed approach of using the mainstem provincial water quality summary as the basis for developing a mainstem water quality plan, Ruff said. We would also like to discuss project priorities, if the group is willing to do so, because the Council's mainstem/ systemwide project solicitation process starts next week and runs through May 31, said Ruff. We would at least like to try to come to agreement on what some of the high-priority projects should be, he said.

Ruff said NMFS has been coordinating with CBFWA on this issue; CBFWA is confident that, if this group is formed and is willing to take the initiative, it will be able to provide some policy direction as to priorities for water quality projects in time to provide that guidance to the Council, he said. Over the long term, the purpose of this group will be to develop the mainstem water quality plan, he explained; in the shorter term, the goal will be to provide some guidance about which water quality projects need to be funded in the mainstem.

Essentially, this is a heads-up to this group that this project is getting underway, said Ruff; we're looking for policy-level participation, starting with next week's meeting. He added that WQT participation is also welcome at next Thursday's meeting.

#### ***5. Next WQT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Water Quality Team was set for Tuesday, May 21. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor.